



Abstracts and Talks

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PHASE I: The Abstract

Format of an Abstract:

Between 150-200 words in length, abstracts tell what the topic is, how it will be discussed, briefly exemplify, and point to the conclusion (the goal of your paper).

What do I keep in mind when writing my abstract?

- Topic: State what the paper is about and how it ties in with the topic of the conference or section you are applying to (1-2 sentences)
- Argument: State what it is you are going to show in your talk and how (1 sentence)
- Exemplification: Illustrate this analytical method briefly (2-3 sentences)
- Goal: Tell what you will conclude with--what you hope to show

Good ploys to make sure you have summed up what you are doing:

- Give abstract to others to read and ask them what they think the paper is about and what the point is.
- Have someone underline 2-3 key words or phrases in your abstract. Check against your own predetermined key word selections.
- Take the title seriously--remember that it must catch the interest of potential attendees and tie in explicitly to the conference or section

Plan your 6-7 page talk at the same time you write your abstract.

Write the longer paper (15 to 25 pages) for publication no later than immediately after giving the talk.

Apply for travel funds if accepted!

PHASE II: The Talk

1. Plan/Write so that the audience will be able to recreate your

- Topic/Thesis/Examples (no more than 3 major categories), and
- Goal (Significance of talk).

2. State all of the above explicitly before commencing the talk--don't worry about being redundant. Listeners need to hear things more than twice (remember a written text cannot be grasped--you must write a talk as a talk)

3. Plan your presentation. Plan on reading about half of the written text. Go over it for

- a. Places where anecdotal material or elaboration is relevant and note those on post-its or marginal comments (PRACTICE EYE CONTACT WITH AUDIENCE).
- b. Key ideas you don't want to miss (1 or 2 per page) should be highlighted or otherwise marked (it's easy to lose sight of the essential wording in a talk setting)
- c. Note optimal progress every page or two--a twenty minute talk can have no more than 5 or 6 pages read comfortably (allowing time for parenthetical comments) but one must still pay attention to running over. NEVER RUN OVER.

4. Have a handout

- a. Your name & University, title of talk, title of section, conference & date, email and/or webpage, preferably in MLA style (so you are easy to quote, easy to copy to CV)
- b. Common formats (depending on the style of paper)
 - key-words for exemplified argument, as in précis matrix
 - list of key arguments or points being made
 - list of significant materials you want audience to be able to refer to in a discussion (e.g. bibliographic references, key quotes in order of presentation and clearly labeled for quick reference)
 - any of above enlarged for transparency or computer

NB: Don't overload. Less is more. 3 entries + a bit of detail are optimal
